

USING PARENT PERCEPTIONS TO HELP SHAPE SCHOOL REFORM: THE CASE OF A HIGH SCHOOL'S ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SCHEDULE

Many U.S. secondary schools are experimenting with alternative learning schedules to improve student achievement. It is estimated that one-third of high schools have transitioned to a form of block scheduling where class periods are extended and fewer classes are taken each day (Viadero, 2001). Block courses are also structured to meet for a nine-week quarter instead of an entire school year.

Block scheduling owes much of its popularity to appealing face validity, promising a deeper teaching and learning opportunity and a less stressful school environment. Student and teacher perceptions seem to support these claims (Slate & Jones, 2000; Knight, DeLeon, & Smith, 1999; Wilson & Stokes, 1999; Lybbert, 1998). Some block schools have also reported better-behaved students and improved attendance and graduation rates (Queen, 2003; Rettig & Canady, 2001; Rettig & Canady, 1999; Wilson & Stokes, 1999).

Back to the Future?

Some high schools that were caught up in the block schedule implementation wave of the 1990s are returning to a traditional learning schedule (Kenney, 2003). Many factors may be contributing to this "regressive" movement including difficulties associated with non-block transfer students, course sequencing (especially in math, foreign languages, and performing arts), holding student attention for 95-minutes, and deep changes in curricular, instructional, and professional development practices (Queen, 2003; Rettig & Canady, 2003). There is also evidence-based doubt about the efficacy of block scheduling to improve student achievement (Bottge, Gugerty, Serlin, & Moon, 2003; Gould, 2003; Arnold, 2002; Lare, Jablonski, & Salvaterra, 2002; Schreiber, Veal, Flinders, & Churchill, 2001; Rettig & Canady, 2001).

What Do Parents Think About Block Scheduling?

To date, the block schedule research agenda has focused on student and school staff perceptions and changes in student performance indicators. There is very little data about what parents think about block scheduling. However, there are indications from cyberspace that parents have been left out of the planning and implementation loop. A block-specific example can be found in Jeff Lindsay's "Cracked Planet" webpage (<http://www.jefflindsay.com/index.html>). Lindsay explains:

My motivation in posting this page is to help prevent my district and other districts from hurting the education of their children with harmful but popular strategies. I have seen that if I and other parents don't dig up the hard data on block scheduling, school boards won't be informed about what the studies show or what the problems really are. Some school administrators who propose block scheduling and who claim to have been doing all the background research for years seem oblivious to any serious studies on it.

Lindsay also describes how some schools "engage" parents in block scheduling reform:

I was amazed to read in our local paper that North High School (...) was planning to adopt block scheduling soon. The article claimed that there was overwhelming support of students and parents (...). However, one parent explained to me how these numbers were obtained. Buried inside a thick newsletter (...) was a small notice, with no fanfare or eye-catching graphics, that any parents opposed to block scheduling should send back a slip indicating they were opposed to it, while those in favor needed to do nothing. Anybody who did not respond was assumed to be in favor of block scheduling, including the hundreds who never saw the small notice, allowing the administration of North High to claim overwhelming support. Now if the "survey" had asked for those in favor of the block to respond, much different results would have been obtained. Probably only a handful of parents ever saw the "survey" notice, and certainly none of them were given meaningful information by the administration about the pros and cons of the block. It's a case of the debate that never happened.

The Research Study

Problem and Purpose

Parents comprise a key stakeholder group of public education that can exert significant influence over school policy, budget, and instructional decisions. Restricting this group's participation in school reform jeopardizes the success of any innovation, no matter how promising. This may be occurring with block scheduling. This research describes the parental perspective of a Wisconsin high school's modified 4x4 block schedule after first-year implementation. It was conducted to help shape and sustain the reform. The study addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent do parents support the high school's move to block scheduling?
2. What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of the block schedule?
3. How do parents perceive the block schedule compared to the traditional schedule?
4. Is there a relationship between parental perceptions of the block schedule, parental role, and grade level of student?
5. What suggestions do parents offer to improve the block schedule?

Context

The Oconomowoc Area School District is located thirty miles west of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and consists of five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Total K-12 enrollment is about 4,100 students. Oconomowoc High School (OHS) serves a population of approximately 1,500 students. The staff includes 103 teachers, most of whom hold a master's degree in their content area, and 52 support personnel. The school facility rests on 53-acres in the City of Oconomowoc and includes a complex for extra curricular sports as well as outdoor physical education classes.

The OHS student body is homogenous in terms of race (97% White) and socio-economic status (approximately 6% economically disadvantaged). Students achieve at a high level, demonstrated by standardized test scores that rank above national and state norms in all subject areas. The high school is also fully accredited by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement.

Like many high schools, OHS sought to reform its learning schedule in the late 1990s to help improve student achievement. A study group was formed (consisting of volunteer and appointed stakeholder representatives) to assess alternative learning schedules. Group members reviewed research findings, solicited feedback from students and school staff, and visited other block schools. Through this process, the group recommended that the Board of Education adopt a modified 4x4 block schedule. The schedule was implemented during the 2001-2002 school year (see Table 1).

Table 1*The High School's Daily Block Schedule (Full vs. Half)*

<u>Full-block class periods</u>			<u>Half-block class periods</u>		
A	7:25-9:00	→	1	7:25-8:10	2 8:15-9:00
B	9:10-10:45	→	3	9:10-9:55	4 10:00-10:45
C	11:25-1:00	→	5	11:25-12:10	6 12:15-1:00
D	1:10-2:45	→	7	1:10-1:55	8 2:00-2:45

Note. There are four daily 95-minute block classes and 45-minute half blocks or “skinnies” to accommodate classes that must meet over an entire school year. The typical student takes three or four block classes each day. There are four nine-week terms per year. Students receive one unit of credit for a block class, and one-half credit for a half block class.

Method

Participants. A random sample of OHS parents (one parent per household, stratified by mother/father) was surveyed about the block schedule during the summer of 2002. Three hundred and forty-eight parents (257 mothers, 77 fathers, 11 guardians/other, 3 not identified) completed and returned useable questionnaires. The response rate was 46% yielding a margin of error of +5%. The grade level of respondents' youngest OHS student was 122 freshman, 97 sophomores, 80 juniors, and 46 seniors. Three parents did not identify their student's grade level.

Questionnaire. A 24-item self-administered questionnaire was developed and mailed to the parent sample. Item development was based upon the block-related literature and context-specific issues. Part 1 of the questionnaire consisted of 12 closed-ended items. Parents were asked to think about the first year of block scheduling (2001-2002) and rate each item on a four-point Likert-type scale of 1=Disagree, 2=Tend to Disagree, 3=Tend to Agree, 4=Agree. A “Don't Know/Not Applicable” response category was also included. Parents with more than one student attending the high school were asked to respond for their youngest student.

Part 2 consisted of six closed-ended items and required parents to compare the “old” class schedule consisting of eight daily periods at 53 minutes to the “new” block schedule. Respondents not qualified to make schedule comparisons (i.e., student did not experience old schedule) were instructed to skip the section and advance to Part 3. Respondents recorded their answers using the previously described four-point scale.

Parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire consisted of several open-ended items. Parents were asked to explain their current level of support (or non-support) of the block schedule and to list the major benefits and drawbacks experienced by their youngest OHS student. Another item solicited ways to improve the new schedule. Part 5 collected demographic information. The time required to complete the questionnaire was about 20 minutes.

Data collection. An adaptation of Dillman’s (2000) Tailored Design Method was used to maximize survey response. A preletter was prepared and mailed to the parent sample. A cover letter, questionnaire, and addressed stamped envelope were sent about a week later. A post-card reminder was sent approximately two weeks after the questionnaire. Additional follow up was not conducted due to receipt of a sufficient number of questionnaires, a fixed timeline, and budget constraints.

Data analysis. The survey data were entered into SPSS Windows 10.1 for analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe responses to closed-ended survey items. Since the block schedule was in the implementation phase, the following baseline response expectations were formulated: 45% of parents will respond “Disagree or Tend to Disagree” to a survey item, 45% will respond “Agree or Tend to Agree,” and 10% will respond “Don’t Know or Not Applicable.” Significant departure from this benchmark is suggestive of relative strengths and weaknesses. The chi-square test was used to compare the observed response frequencies to the baseline expectations and to identify relationships among responses, parental role, and grade level of the parent’s youngest student. The four-point response scale was collapsed into three categories for analysis.

A three-phase “cut and paste” strategy was used to analyze the written feedback. The analysis involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Berkowitz, 1997). Data reduction required categorizing data (i.e., words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs) and choosing which were to be emphasized, minimized, or excluded based upon the purpose of the evaluation. Frequency and intensity of responses were noted to add weight to the analysis.

Results

To What Extent Do Parents Support the High School's Move to the Block Schedule?

Parental support for the new schedule was divided (see Table 2). About one half of respondents supported the schedule change before and after implementation. A significant "support slip" (-10.5%) was reported by parents of junior and senior students (see Figure 1).

Table 2

Parent Perceptions of the Block Schedule After One Year of Implementation

	<i>n</i>	DK ^a /NA	Tend to disagree/ Disagree	Tend to agree/ Agree	<i>X</i> ²
Baseline expectations	—	10.0%	45.0%	45.0%	—
<u>Parent Perceptions</u>					
1. My student exhibited a good attitude about school.	346	0.0%	28.9%	71.1%	61.60**
2. My student was able to select from a variety of course offerings.	346	0.6%	22.8%	76.6%	145.22**
3. My student was able to pay attention throughout the longer class periods.	345	1.4%	52.2%	46.4%	29.32**
4. My student received individualized attention from teachers.	341	4.7%	40.2%	55.1%	19.15**
5. My student was instructed at an acceptable pace.	344	3.5%	36.3%	60.2%	37.92**
6. My student used the longer study hall periods productively.	345	22.3%	44.9%	32.8%	63.81**

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

	<i>n</i>	DK ^a /NA	Tend to disagree/ Disagree	Tend to agree/ Agree	χ^2
<u>Parent Perceptions</u>					
7. My student easily caught up with schoolwork after absences.	346	12.1%	43.1%	44.8%	1.87
8. My student had enough time for extra-curricular activities.	346	8.4%	12.1%	79.5%	175.34**
9. I was offered a "Help Your Student Succeed" orientation to the block schedule.	341	35.8%	29.3%	34.9%	252.81**
10. I received regular communication about the block schedule.	339	9.1%	45.7%	45.1%	0.29
11. I originally supported the high school's move to block scheduling.	345	7.8%	42.0%	50.1%	4.34
12. I currently support the high school's move to block scheduling.	344	5.2%	48.3%	46.5%	8.80*

Note. Cronbach's Alpha = 0.714. Margin of error = $\pm 5\%$. Percentages not totaling 100 are due to rounding.

^aDK/NA = Don't Know, Not Applicable.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

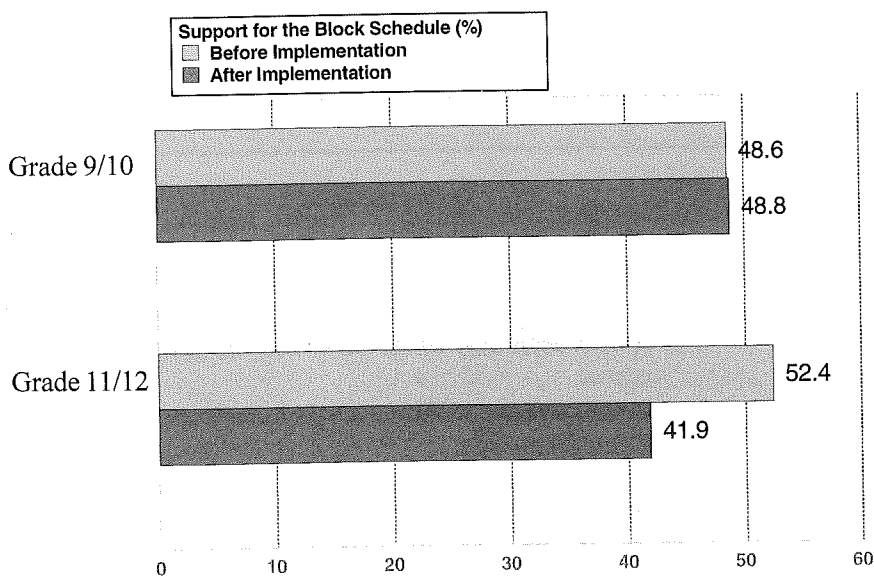


Figure 1. Percentage of parents supporting the move to a block schedule.

Approximately 91% of parents submitted reasons for supporting the block schedule (see Table 3). These included less stress and homework for students, and better focused students. A deeper and individualized teaching and learning opportunity was also cited.

Reasons for not supporting the new schedule included students' inability to maintain attention throughout the longer class periods, inadequate course sequencing/schedule flexibility, and teacher readiness to instruct and manage block classes. The heightened academic cost of missing school was also cited. Some parents were undecided about the block schedule, explaining that more time was needed for development and refinement.

Table 3

Parent Reasons for Supporting (or not) the Block Schedule

Category	Sample data
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer classes left more time to devote to a few select classes, decreasing stress and increasing grades.• More in-depth discussion and involvement in the subject material.• It seems like the student has less homework with fewer and longer classes.• It gives the kids an opportunity to take more courses. When they have a class they don't like it helps them to know it's over in one semester. It helps my kids to focus on and put more effort into their work.• This gives my kids more Q & A time with their teachers. I didn't see fewer students in the classroom, but it gave extra time to get to know my child.
Do not support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The classes are too long and the students lost interest in paying attention.• Too much time between math, science, foreign languages. There's no consistency and it's hard to retain info.• It seems a lot of class time turns into "get your homework done" time as opposed to learning.• Course work was uneven, curriculum dropped or not covered.• I have reservations concerning teacher preparation and student attention.• If you are sick or out for 2 days it is like being out for a week.
Undecided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To move forward is to try new things. It will take a few years or so to really see any results.• Not enough time to tell if I support it or not.• We believe that the current block schedule can be very beneficial in the long run. Our children have struggled and need more time.• We need to work out the bugs and teachers need to adapt teaching styles.

What Are the Perceived Strengths of the Block Schedule?

Parents indicated that their student had enough time for extra-curricular activities (79.5%), selected from a variety of course offerings (76.6%), exhibited a good attitude about school (71.1%), was instructed at an acceptable pace (60.2%), and received individualized attention from teachers (55.1%) under the block schedule (see Table 2). A disproportion of respondents disagreed [$X^2(6, n=346) 15.791, p=.015$] that there was a variety of course offerings for their senior student.

Approximately 88% of respondents listed the major benefits of block scheduling (see Table 4). Fewer daily classes resulted in less stress and homework for students. Parents also perceived students to be better focused and organized. Longer class periods produced an individualized and deeper teaching and learning opportunity for students. There was also opportunity for more continuity of learning (completion of labs, projects, etc.). The quarter-long classes were a "plus" because students could accumulate more credits over a high school career. Another perceived benefit was less time spent with "problem" teachers and students.

Table 4

Parent Perceptions of Block Schedule Benefits

Component	Benefit
Fewer classes each day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer subjects to focus on. Helped my child be more organized. Not feeling overwhelmed by too much homework.• Fewer classes to handle, less homework, no exams.• Less stress, able to manage time better.• Less stress, better organized w/block, more time for homework in class, better able to attend and focus in class and get work done.• Fewer classes at one time. Ability to really concentrate on the classes he had.
Longer class periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More attention from teachers.• Some classes benefited from the longer class period (science, labs, music, phys. ed.), students have more time to learn in depth.• Get to know students in your class better.• Lab time, extended periods for uninterrupted thought. Less stop/go and set up time for labs.
Semester classes /More classes each year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They can get in more classes in 4 years.• More classes available throughout the year.• My student was able to take more classes.• My son did not have to work for an entire year with a teacher from whom he had difficulty learning.• Credit accumulation.

What Are the Perceived Weaknesses of the Block Schedule?

Responses to one survey item exceeded baseline expectations suggesting a relative weakness. Fifty-two percent (52.2%) of parents indicated students had difficulty paying attention throughout the longer block classes (see Table 2). Approximately 90% of parents listed schedule drawbacks which included schedule inflexibility (course sequencing and alternative course selections), inattentiveness in block classes, ineffective instruction/use of class time, and higher stakes for missing school (see Table 5).

Table 5*Parent Perceptions of Block Schedule Drawbacks*

Category	Drawback
Inflexibility of schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 1-2 offerings a year of an honors class. Trying to balance the blocks each semester with two major classes each semester. • Lack of class selection, classes offered and chosen were dropped from the schedule. • Schedule conflicts with the classes he wanted. • Too much study hall time, AP caused scheduling conflicts. • Classes not taught in sequence (math) and too much time between courses. • She couldn't take some of the classes she wanted because of conflicts with band and they were offered both semesters in the same block. • Had too many study halls, because you couldn't get into classes.
Maintaining attention in block classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too long, became bored and tired. • Hard to concentrate for that length of time. • Some days classes would feel too long and students would get bored. • Long class periods, hard to stay focused. • The students "tune out" because it is too long of a time on one subject and sitting.
Heightened academic cost of absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a day is missed, it is hard to make up the work. • A lot of homework if you're absent. • Missing class time for excused absences, it was difficult to catch up. 2-3 days missed could equal 2 weeks worth of assignments. • Hard to catch up after an absence. • Hard to make up work.
Uneven instructional pace in block classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some classes didn't cover all the material as outlined. • The amount of information in one day. If student needed help, he got lost. It goes at too quick a pace. • Too much cramming.

(continued)

Table 5 (continued)

Category	Drawback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A chapter a week is too much for math and science. What is the point of doing an entire textbook if they miss the concepts?• Teachers rush through things to get all requirements in.
Ineffective use of instruction/ Time in block classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some instructors lectured the whole 95 minutes. Can't keep kids engaged that long. Other instructors didn't know how to fill the class time.• Too long if teacher lectures the whole time. Teachers need more time to be trained. Be more creative with activities for extra time.• Too much lecturing in some classes, too many notes to take.• They need to diversify the lessons and use different types of learning opportunities within the length of time to keep their attention.• Sometimes you don't do anything the whole class period.• While my students liked it, some teachers filled the extra time with movies.• Study halls were a waste of time.• Study halls too long.

Were Parents Uncertain About Some Aspects of the Block Schedule?

Responses to several survey items exceeded baseline expectations suggesting several uncertainties about the new schedule (see Table 2). About thirty-six percent (35.8%) of parents did not know whether a schedule orientation had been offered to them. Thirty percent (29.9%) did not know if class sizes were smaller under the block schedule, and 22.3% did not know if the longer study hall periods were used productively.

How Do Parents Perceive the Block Schedule Compared to the Traditional Schedule?

Parents of OHS students who experienced the old and new schedule were asked to make a comparison (see Table 6). Approximately one-half of respondents indicated students managed homework better under the block

schedule while 42.8% indicated less stress for students. Only one-third of parents indicated students were more interested in classes and earned better grades.

Table 6

Parent Perceptions of Traditional vs. Block Scheduling

	<i>n</i>	DK ^a /NA	Tend to disagree/ Disagree	Tend to agree/ Agree	χ^2
Baseline expectations	—	10.0%	45.0%	45.0%	—
<u>Parent Perceptions</u>					
13. My student attended classes with fewer students per class under the block schedule.	274	29.9%	49.6%	20.4%	46.84**
14. My student selected from a greater variety of course offerings under the block schedule.	274	12.4%	46.7%	40.9%	2.80
15. My student showed more interest in classes under the block schedule.	271	4.8%	62.7%	32.5%	35.73**
16. My student earned better grades under the block schedule.	271	6.6%	58.7%	34.7%	20.72**
17. My student managed homework better under the block schedule.	273	5.5%	43.6%	50.9%	7.79*
18. My student experienced less school stress under the block schedule.	271	5.5%	51.7%	42.8%	8.37*

Note. Cronbach's Alpha = 0.779. Margin of error = +5%. Percentages not totaling 100 are due to rounding.

^aDK/NA = Don't Know, Not Applicable.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

What Suggestions Did Parents Offer to Improve the Block Schedule?

Approximately 77% of the respondents suggested ways to improve the block schedule (see Table 7). Block-related teacher training that focused on curriculum prioritization, block-appropriate instructional techniques, and management of class time was emphasized. Other suggestions included offering more skinny courses, shortening block class periods and study halls, requiring mandatory class breaks, and adding a flex-period for tutors and makeup work. Some respondents suggested a return to the traditional schedule.

Table 7

Parent Suggestions for Improving the Block Schedule

Category	Suggestion
Block-related professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have teachers take a mandatory class on how to teach in the block schedule.• More training for the teachers on how to teach the best in a block schedule.• Teachers need help in "how to teach" the block.• Make sure teachers have a clear curriculum. Continue monitoring classes to make sure teachers are on task.• Classes for teachers to learn how to adapt better.
Schedule modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mix long and short block subjects. Study blocks are short.• Give more options as skinnies and blocks within the core curriculum courses. For example, let students pick what they want to do for English, a skinny or a block.• Sequencing more courses. Shortening the block to 80 minutes and adding a flex-period for tutors and make up work.• Stagger block times for specialized classes so that students who have band, choir, etc. during the same block all year can benefit from a larger variety of classes.• Math, science, and foreign languages in skinnies.• Study halls should be 45 minutes not 90 minutes and more 45 minutes electives could be offered instead.

(continued)

Table 7 (*continued*)

Category	Suggestion
Return to traditional schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to traditional schedule. • I'm for the old scheduling. • Remove it!! Bring back old system. • Discontinue block scheduling! • Go back to old schedule!
Class period modification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory break times during class. • Ensure that teachers set aside time to contact parents, especially for those at risk for academic failure. • Let the kids either have a snack break or eat something in class.

Limitations

The consumer of case specific research must be aware of factors that influence conclusions, recommendations, and generalizations. Delimitations indicate the population for which generalizations may be validly applied and depend upon the conditions of randomization and sampling (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987). In this study, generalization of results is constrained to the local district. However, transfer of findings may be possible if the research consumer determines a salient overlap in context (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Survey data are limited by several factors including the motivation to present oneself or others in the best possible light, incomplete answers, and contextual influences beyond the researcher's control. For example, parent responses may have been colored by ongoing district-teacher contract negotiations, recent instructional budget cuts, and a leadership transition at the high school. In addition, voluntary participation in the survey may have increased non-response error. Responses from fathers were underrepresented in the survey data. The reader is also reminded that parents considered their youngest high school student when responding to most survey items. Our findings suggest that perceptions of block scheduling may have been less positive if parents considered their eldest OHS student.

Discussion

This study sought the parental perspective of a Wisconsin high school's block schedule after one year of implementation to help shape the reform. School leaders may find the results useful in their quest to initiate and sustain alternative learning schedules. The major findings are discussed in the following sections.

Parents Were Divided About the Move to Block Scheduling

It was learned that parents were divided about the move to block scheduling. The evaluand was likely unaware of parent sentiment because it, like many schools, relied on the perceptions and recommendations of enthusiastic volunteers and appointees to guide the reform process. Extending planning work beyond the "study group" phase to include representative samples of stakeholder perceptions may have provided school leaders an opportunity to address parental concerns and to leverage "up front" support needed to sustain the schedule during its formative years. The extended process might include a triangulated approach to collecting and interpreting data (see Figure 2). Triangulation (collecting multiple data sets from a variety of sources in a variety of ways) is valuable because it surfaces converging (and diverging) stakeholder perceptions thereby giving school leaders a better means of judging the quality of information and information giver.

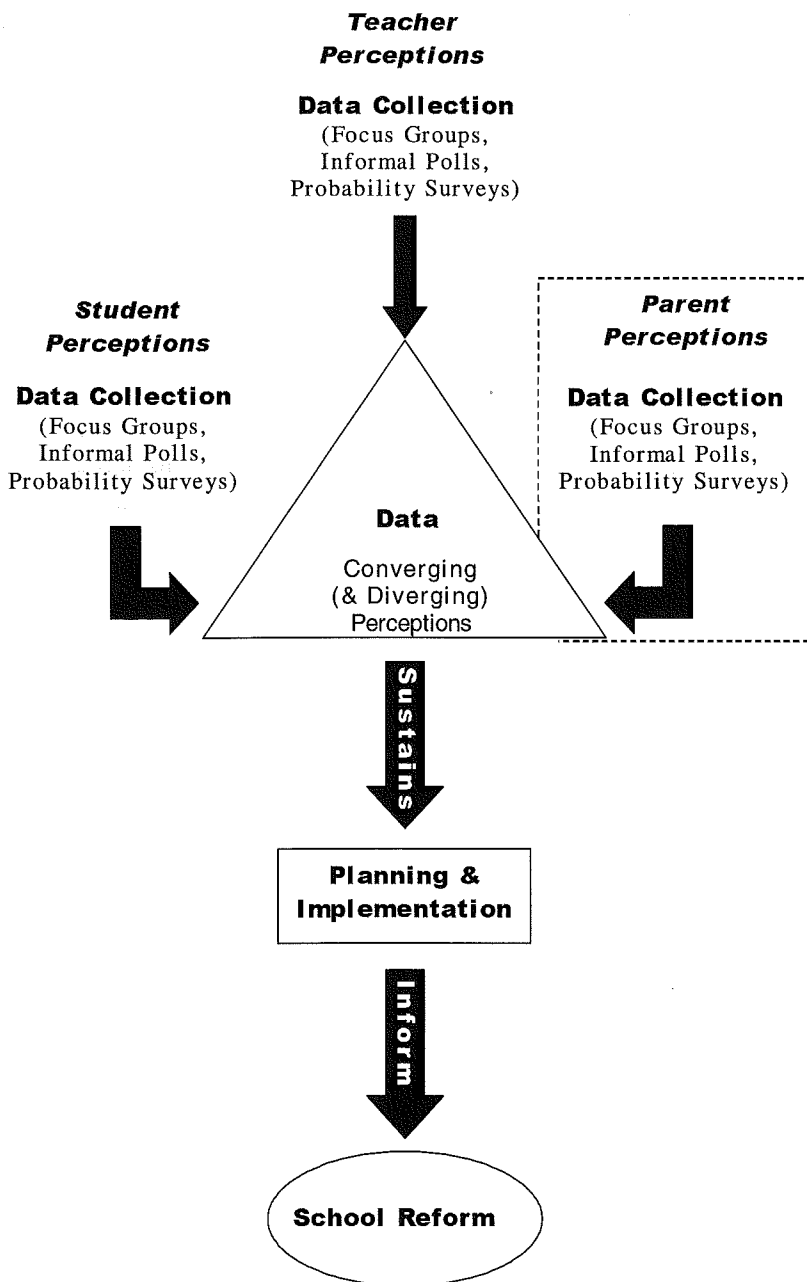


Figure 2. Using triangulation to help shape and sustain school reform.
Support for Block Scheduling "Slipped" Among Parents of Upperclassmen

A significant “support slip” for the block schedule was reported by parents of upperclassmen. This finding is likely attributable to frustrations over course availability for junior and senior students grounded in the traditional schedule. Overall perceptions of the block schedule may improve as these students move through the system. However, school leaders should anticipate and prepare to reduce the effect of this potential threat to block scheduling.

Improvement Suggestions Implicated Better Alignment Among Block Scheduling, Professional Development, and Instructional Practices

The improvement feedback offered by parents implicated a need to strengthen the connections among block scheduling, professional development, and instructional practices. This finding reinforces the notion that simply changing learning time does not cause improvement in student achievement. Complementary changes in teaching and learning practices are also required to maximize the opportunities created by schedule reform. Better alignment may be achieved by restructuring professional development to provide staff regular opportunities to meet, collaborate, and work as an integrated group toward improving student achievement (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). For the evaluand, this would involve fitting curriculum, instructional techniques, and instructional pace to the block schedule.

Incomplete Answers to Some Survey Items Implicated a Need to Enhance Regular Communication About the Block Schedule

A greater than expected number of parents responded “Don’t Know/Not Applicable” to several survey items. This response pattern could be attributed to insufficient communication with parents about the new schedule. The evaluand may enhance communication by executing an information dissemination strategy that uses multiple vehicles (e.g., print media, Internet, verbal presentation, etc.) to deliver important block-related information. School leaders may also make special efforts to communicate with parents via students. Thomas and O’Connell (1997) found that parents often improved their understanding of block scheduling through informal talks with their children.

Conclusion

Parents comprise a key stakeholder group of public education that can exert significant influence over school policy, budget, and instructional

decisions. Restricting this group's participation in school reform jeopardizes the success of any innovation, no matter how promising. This may be occurring with block scheduling. Extending planning work beyond the "study group" phase to include representative samples of stakeholder perceptions will provide school leaders an opportunity to address concerns and leverage "up front" support needed to shape and sustain educational reform.

References

- Arnold, D. E. (2002). Block schedule and traditional schedule achievement: A comparison. *NASSP Bulletin*, 86(630), 42-53.
- Berkowitz, S. (1997). Analyzing qualitative data. In J. Frechtling & L. Sharp (Eds.), *User-friendly handbook for mixed methods evaluations* (pp. 4-1-22). Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation.
- Bottge, B. A., Gugerty, J. J., Serlin, R. C., & Moon, K. S. (2003). Block and traditional schedules: Effects on students with and without disabilities in high school. *NASSP Bulletin*, 87(636), 2-14.
- Desimone, L., Porter, A. C., Garet, M. S., Yoon, K. S., & Birman, B. F. (2002, Summer). Effects of professional development on teachers' instruction: Results from a three-year longitudinal study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(2), 81-112.
- Dillman, D. A. (2000). *Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Gould, P. F. (2003). Scheduling choice. *Education Week*, 22(34), 34-35.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Kenney, L. C. (2003). Back from the block—Or not? *The School Administrator*, 60, 21-25.
- Knight, S. L., DeLeon, N. J., & Smith, R. G. (1999). Using multiple data sources to evaluate an alternative scheduling model. *The High School Journal*, 83, 1-13.
- Lare, D., Jablonski, A. M., & Salvaterra, M. (2002). Block scheduling: Is it cost-effective? *NASSP Bulletin*, 86(630), 54-71.
- Lindsay, J. *The cracked planet of Jeff Lindsay*. Retrieved November 14, 2003, from <http://www.jefflindsay.com/index.html>.
- Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (1987). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lybbert, B. (1998). *Transforming learning with block scheduling: A guide for principals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

- Queen, J. A. (2003). *The block schedule handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Rettig, M. & Canady, R. (1999). The effects of block scheduling. *The School Administrator*, 56, 14-20.
- Rettig, M. D. & Canady, R. L. (2001). Block scheduling: More benefits than challenges. Response to Thomas 2001. *NASSP Bulletin*, 85(628), 78-86.
- Rettig, M. & Canady, R. (2003). Block scheduling's missteps, successes and variables. *The School Administrator*, 60, 26-31.
- Schreiber, J. B., Veal, W. R., Flinders, D. J., & Churchill, S. (2001). Second year analysis of a hybrid schedule high school. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 9(49), 1-18.
- Slate, J. R., & Jones, C. H. (2000, February/March). Students' perspectives on block scheduling: Reactions following a brief trial period. *The High School Journal*, 84, 55-65.
- Thomas, C., & O'Connell, R. W. (1997). *Parent perceptions of block scheduling in a New York State public high school*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the New England Educational Research Organization, Portsmouth, NH.
- Viadero, D. (2001, October). Changing times. *Education Week*, 21(5), 38-40.
- Wilson, J. W., & Stokes, L. C. (1999, October/November). Teachers' perceptions of the advantages and measurable outcomes of the 4x4 block scheduling design. *The High School Journal*, 83, 44-54.

Derick M. Kiger is the Director of Educational Research, Technology and Assessment at the Oconomowoc Area School District, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.